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Public Health

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Well Rule Changes Effective July 1, 2008

On July 1st, 2008,a program mandated by the State of North Carolina to regulate private drinking water wells becomes effective throughout North Carolina. The new regulations are the result of 2006 legislation (North Carolina General Statutes 87-87 and 87-89) that directed the N.C. Environmental Management Commission to adopt rules, and local health departments to inspect and permit these wells. About 35% of local health departments, including Catawba County's, had rules in place when the legislation was passed.

Catawba County has had well rules in effect since 2001, so the Environmental Health Department of Catawba County Public Health is well positioned to assume the responsibilities required under the new rules. Since local rules must be more stringent than State rules, and the State rules provide protection equal to or more robust than the Catawba County rules, the local rules will be repealed at midnight on June 30, 2008. Catawba County Environmental Health will begin operating under the state rules on July 1, 2008.

There should be little apparent change for well contractors who have worked in Catawba County since 2001," said Ed Rivers, Catawba County Environmental Health Administrator. "The repeal of local rules will also ensure consistency with procedures in neighboring counties. However, water sampling provisions in the State rules may involve a bit of planning and coordination by contractors, as the testing is now required, rather than optional, as was the case with the local rules."

The State rules require additional water testing upon completion of the well. Bacteriological, nitrate, nitrite, and inorganic chemical sampling are required to be conducted. Previously, only a bacteriological test was performed. These tests are now included as a part of the process when applying for a new or replacement well. Environmental Health staff will collect these samples at the final inspection and submit them for analysis.

To help to avoid project delays, before requesting a final well inspection you should ensure that:

- Electrical power is supplied to the well so that samples can be drawn.
- Chlorination has been performed and the treatment has been completely run off (wells with residual chlorine detected cannot be sampled).

While Catawba County expect a smooth transition, Environmental Health Specialists will be happy to address any questions that may arise as a result of the change. You may contact Environmental Health at (828) 465-8270, EnvHealth@catawbacountync.gov, or visit our offices at the Government Center in Newton.

